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HOMICIDE IN AMERICAN CITIES

THE PARDON OF ALBERT T. PATRICK.

Albert T. Patrick some twelve years ago was brought to trial in New York for the premeditated murder of an old man, William Marsh Rice, his benefactor. The evidence tended to show that the purpose of the murder was to enrich the murderer by obtaining possession of the estate of his victim by means of a forged will. Patrick, himself a shrewd lawyer, had the benefit of unlimited financial resources at his trial through the assistance of relatives of means. The jury trying the case was one of exceptional intelligence and after a protracted trial found Patrick guilty. He was sentenced to be electrocuted. Then began the enactment of the usual series of appeals in such cases that tend to bring the whole system of administration of criminal law into general disrepute. The motion for a new trial was submitted in a brief of several hundred pages and embraced all the points which human ingenuity could invent, yet after long argument and deliberation the motion was denied and on appeal to the highest tribunal in the state the conviction was affirmed.

The sentence of death was later commuted to one of life imprisonment and later two governors refused further clemency.

In the face of these facts Governor Dix, after a secret hearing at which there were present pleaders whose identity the Governor declines to disclose, issued a full pardon to Patrick and in his announcement of the pardon states that *after his release* he hopes Patrick will demonstrate *his innocence*.

This act of Governor Dix, while one of the most striking abuses of executive clemency in recent times and an example to the entire country of the failure of the law to work justice, will have served a good purpose if it causes legislation doing away with the power of any executive, after a secret hearing, to set aside the decision of an established court of law, and removing wholly from pardoning power any criminal sentenced to life imprisonment, requiring that such cases must be brought before a pardoning board at an open hearing on newly discovered evidence and limiting the power of such board to an order for a new trial.

FREDERIC B. CROSSLEY

HOMICIDE IN AMERICAN CITIES.

Mr. F. L. Hoffman, statistician for the Prudential Insurance Company, in a recent number of the *Spectator*, a New York insurance journal, analyzed the homicide record of thirty American cities and compared the results with the record of England and Wales.

HOMICIDE IN AMERICAN CITIES

"According to the published mortality statistics of the Bureau of the Census for 1910," says Mr. Hoffman, "the number of deaths from homicide in the registration area, as finally reported for that year, was 3,190, equivalent to a death rate of 5.9 per 100,000 of population. The average rate for the ten-year period ending with 1909 was 4.3, and for more recent years in detail the rates were 5.0 for 1906, 6.3 for 1907, 6.4 for 1908, and 5.6 for 1909. Only two specific methods are returned, it being stated that out of the 3190 deaths from homicide in the registration area 1852, or 3.4 per 100,000 of population, were caused by fire-arms; 452, or 0.8, by cutting or piercing instruments and 886, or 1.6 per 100,000 of population, by other means."

He presents a table showing that the rate of homicide increased from an average of 5 per 100,000 of the population during the ten years ending with 1891 to 7.2 during the ten years ending with 1911, the maximum occurring in 1907, when it attained to 8.8 per 100,000 of the population. Making all due allowance for errors the census returns unquestionably establish the fact that not only is the homicide rate in the United States exceedingly high, but that the rate has materially increased during recent years. During the decade ending with 1910 the highest homicide rate was in Memphis, where it attained 47.1 per 100,000 of the population; in 1911 it rose to 63.4; in Charleston it was 27.7; in Savannah, 25.6; in New Orleans, 22.2; in St. Louis, 12.6; and in San Francisco, 11.2. Our criminal record for 1911 is even more unenviable especially in the large cities. Chicago led off with 203 homicides (according to a recent report of the Coroner the number for the past year was 221); New York, not including Brooklyn, followed with 197; St. Louis had 108, and Memphis, 85; the aggregate for the thirty cities being 1,300. Comparing this record with that of England and Wales Mr. Hoffman finds the advantage very much on the side of the English. Thus in all England and Wales in 1909, with a population of nearly 36,000,000 inhabitants, there were only 287 homicides, hardly more than were reported in the two American cities of Chicago and Memphis. On this point Mr. Hoffman says:

"This comparison emphasizes the extremely high homicide rate prevailing in the United States at the present time. For males and females the average rate for England and Wales was 0.9 per 100,000 of population, against 4.3 for the registration area of the United States. In other words, there was an excess of 378% in the homicide mortality of the United States over the corresponding homicide record of England and Wales. Comparing males only, the rate for England and Wales was 0.9 per 100,000 of population, against 6.5 for the registration area of the United States. The American rate, therefore, was 622% in excess of the English rate. For females the English rate was exactly the same

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as for males, or 0.9 per 100,000 of population, whereas for the registration area of the United States the female rate was 2.0 per 100,000 of female population."

Mr. Hoffman observes what is obvious to every well-informed person, that such a record brings out in startling contrast the already large and increasing disregard of human life in the United States. The figures which he presents go far toward disproving the truth of the assertion which we sometimes hear that the American people are the most law-abiding in the world, and they seem to confirm the truth of the statement made some years ago by Mr. Andrew D. White, that the United States now leads the world in the amount of crime committed within its borders, unless we except Southern Italy and Sicily. Such a showing is discreditable to us as a people and the problem of how to check this increasing criminality is certainly one of the greatest that confronts our civilization.

JAMES W. GARNER.

POLITICS AND PENITENTIARIES.

Press Dispatch. "Chicago, December 14, 1912.—Governor-elect Dunne is semi-officially announced to have selected, as chairman of the State Board of Administration of Charities (vice L. Y. Sherman), John Doe, an active member of the Democratic State Central Committee; and, as warden of the State Penitentiary at Joliet (vice E. F. Murphy), Richard Roe, chairman of the Democratic Campaign Committee."

The above is the kind of announcement nowadays to be seen in the newspapers of Illinois, and of other States in which the recently successful party is a different one from the victor at the election of four years ago.

And this is our boasted American civilization! How civilized is this practice of ours! How reasonable! How highly moral! How humane! How practical!

Ten thousand or so people—dependent, defective, delinquent—are under the care of the State of Illinois; a heavy responsibility, needing wisdom, experience, high character, and tried ability for its management. Modern science and philanthropy are doing their best to establish sound principles and to develop efficient methods. The community is struggling to cope with the urgent problems which disease, misfortune and crime force upon it through these inmates of its institutions. The world is growing wiser every day with new and better methods for avoiding the crude blunders of earlier days. A good hope is visible for achieving something which shall justify this generation's boast that it is progressive and civilized. And now——

The chairman of the great state board and warden of the great